



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

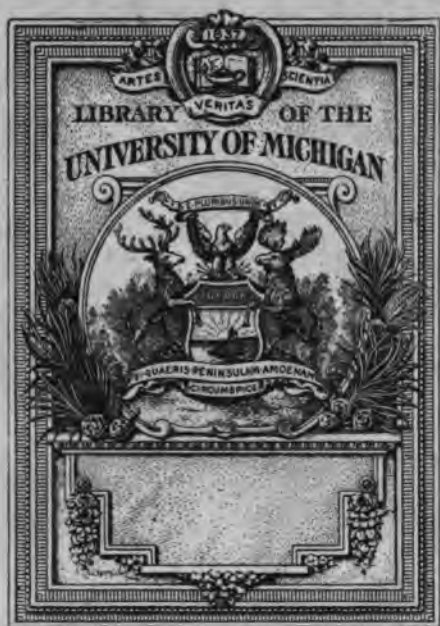
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

E57





JA
84
G17
E37



ENGLISH POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN 1600

L. W. ELDER

SUMMARY OF TWO LECTURES GIVEN IN A COURSE ON THE HISTORY OF
CIVILIZATION, MCPHERSON COLLEGE, 1906.

U of M

WFOU

U 10 4/2 13 7. 7.

ENGLISH POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN 1600

L. W. ELDER

Since there is in the half century preceding Hobbes, a paucity of technical philosophical expression, one who is interested in this period must be content to construct a hypothetical edifice of thought from the scattered and untechnical expressions in general literature. For political philosophy, Shakespeare's King Richard II offers a field for investigation. As we pass from Shakespeare's early period to such a work as this, we notice a radical change in his attitude. He is no longer filled with the phenomenology of the age, as the exponent of the exaggerated personal; but is rather the historian of the inner spirit, seeking meaning in that life of which he had been so preeminently characteristic. No longer merely carried along by fashionable thought, he becomes prophetic of the skeptical and reflective attitude which history recognizes as an inevitable accompaniment of the Renaissance.

The questions of what is real and true; what is universal; what reality and what universality have individuals, we here have translated into the corresponding terms of politics. They may be stated as follows:

1. What is real and universal in the state? The old dogma of kingship is brought into question. The drama occurs in the warring of the traditions of the king as

190489

U 10 4/2 13 7. 7.

a universal individual, and the growing consciousness of a real life coextensive with society. Why is it that the king by divine right comes to an unhappy end? There is no answer in the mere record of history, and to the enquiring mind there is a certain sense of defeat. The king proves to be no king: a universal which is but one thing among other things. For this antithesis of a king as universal, over against the people as the Many, there appears to be no solution; unless, by a complete change of attitude toward the state, we can show why the universal should be identified with the end of society. Though we admit, if it is a fact, that the ideals of society triumph over those of any individual, even a king's, yet we cannot say why it should be so.

2. What reality have individuals in personal relations with others? If the king is the universal, (the only real individual in the state), then all relations among men are abstractions, unless centered in the king. Such relations as men have to one another are mediated through the king's court—which is correspondingly an abstraction for the universal which comprehends diversity. The solution of this problem lies in the growing sense of nationality, which will give reality and worth to personal relations in society.

The conservative position, upholding the divine right of kings, is represented by the church in the person of the bishop, and by the old barony in York. The position rests upon the theory of a supernatural power external to the world. The physical world is (equally) arbitrary and lawless; and for that reason this supermundane power must impose itself upon the natural: for it is thus that the eternal order of the universe will be made manifest in the affairs of men. The dogma of the divine right



of kings' may be regarded as an hypothesis to allay doubts concerning this eternal order. It is an explanation of an institution so old that its origin and history have been forgotten. If then, the history of this institution is unknown in natural terms, its traditional authority must be explained by reference to another sphere. Hence kingship receives an extra-natural explanation. (K. R. 2: Act III, 98, 71, 127, 272, 336, IV, 118).

The beginnings of doubt and the first conflict of a new consciousness with the old tradition of kingship is represented in Gaunt's attitude. (Ibid I, 508). His skepticism implies that even a king cannot act contrary to natural laws. A king's power lies in being at one with nature: not opposed. So far as kingship is a divine right, just so far is it arbitrary and non-natural. Arbitrary, extra-natural kingship, Gaunt implies, has no real power. Even York in his assiduity to profess his reverence for the old authority, lets slip a question on the king's justice, implying that though he be king by "fair sequence and succession," yet he cannot set aside the institutions which are the outgrowth of social life. (II, 204, 241). Though the dualism of the natural and the supernatural is maintained, it is implied that political institutions are natural in their origin, and in their development subject to natural laws, without supernatural interference.

A positive expression of the new ideal of kingship is embodied in Bolingbroke, though intimations of the same spirit are found in Richard himself. While the speeches of the latter may be affected, there is implied a concession to that new consciousness in the people. It indicates on Richard's part a notion of kingly responsibility even though that responsibility be but an abstraction in the

service of his arbitrary power. It is here that the new sense of kingship connects with the new idea of personal relations based on individual worth. Politics is now regarded as an institution of social well-being. Its purpose is not to exalt just one individual; but every individual, even the king, must react in ordinary relations with others. The king like other individuals owes his service to the state. (III, 421-5). In fact the king, just because the leader of the people, because he embodies and secures their ends, resigns his individuality to see it re-expressed in the life of the whole. The grim-minded gardener gives expression to a vulgar point of view. (III, 513). He forgets that the leaders in a society embody the ideals which are only incipient in the group as a whole; and the "top-lofty" ones are needed to shape institutions to new ends. The gardener is even reactionary, since, by confusing the state with the king as the only real individual in the state, he implies a return to the conservative position. (III, 542).

The status and value of the Many, or the question of personal relations, arises out of an inquiry concerning the meaning of feudalism and chivalry. That men have no true and universal relations between themselves, we infer from the fact that a personal grudge has no standing at court. (I, 9). Any relation to have value must involve the king directly, as e. g. in treason; and any situation which does not involve the king, because by that very fact illegal, is at once construed as casting suspicion on all the parties concerned. Because the relations of men are arbitrary, the situations in which they are placed may be as arbitrarily solved by the sovereign. (I, 400). This power of the sovereign is reflected in the at least formal moral isolation of men



from each other. Bolingbroke's conduct being interpreted as a subversion of recognised good (the established order), entails as a penalty an equally violent procedure for the sake of justice. But this justice, far from being an instrument for the maintenance of recognised good is only the personal interest of a universal individual. The king talks about "the unstooping firmness of my upright soul," but this may be regarded as the abstraction for that justice and pretentious righteousness which must be expected as an element in an absolute monarch. Richard's uprightness is a formal affair deriving its authority from the same attitude of mind that permits such a king to reign.

The significance of the sentence passed on Bolingbroke, lies of course in the fact that he was not morally isolated from his fellows. In being banished, king and people alike suffered. (I, sc. iii). The conduct of every one is informed by the ideals of the people as a whole. The actor derives his motive from the group which furnishes the opportunity of action. If then we pass judgement on one who leads the people we strike at their ideal.

That a man would be willing to stake his life for the righteousness of his conduct, is evidence that there was more vitality in the mediaeval consciousness of conduct than is usually allowed. (I, 80). Chivalry brought with it a more intense conviction of man's ability to solve moral situations than we have today. But it must be remembered in dealing with the waning end of chivalry, as we are in the drama before us, that the content of conduct was not real action, but honor. (I, 169). Honor, which may be called the supernatural in conduct, is the pursuit of an abstraction formed by taking the principle for the

content of conduct. Chivalry of course reflects the morality of an age which has lost its sense of reality and leaves the world behind in search of signs and wonders. Conduct in such an age is made up of abstractions which would have reality only in such an other world as chivalry vainly tries to habilitate.

The drama shows the inability of these old institutions to maintain their meaning; and the failure of all old methods of solution is due the advent of new ideals in conduct. Norfolk's speech implies the doctrine that life for man is an existence in a social medium. (I, 457). True honor is a principle of social relation; not an abstract ideal, but one which depends on a sense of unified life and the inherent value of a man. (II, 40-65). The further development of this attitude is found in "King John." Shakespeare is again seeking the spiritual motives underlying the events of history. Where the old idea of kingship and the new ideals of the people are at variance, as always, the effete and external must give place to the vital and organic. The problems underlying this drama may be put as follows:

1. A new sense of the meaning of kingship is arising.
2. There is a new ideal of individual worth, not based on any such accidents as blood, birth, etc.
3. Correspondingly there is a new ideal of man's end in life as a member of a commercial community; and also a consciousness of the end for which a society exists.

The new sense of personality comes as a reflection on the strict socialisation to which man was subject in the form of fealty and deference to authority. Yet, if the Renaissance man broke away from authority, it was not without a comprehension of social relations. Whereas

once there had been no opportunities for individual action, now he is with others developing a society which does give opportunity. We are prone to see in a rebellion against custom, only the exaggerated personal or the mere idiosyncrasy. But the social side is there, equally aristocratic, as perhaps it must necessarily be, due to the influence of the consciousness of personal merit and power. Of the personal side of the Renaissance, Faulconbrige is the best example. Starting in life with a stigma upon his origin, yet he rises to power in the state; and throughout is the one who asserts his right to do things with all but unwavering confidence in his ability. Individual worth belongs to man as man; it is intrinsic and natural. A man's value is not something different from his actuality, and does not depend on accidents of status in society.

The nativistic endowment of the individual requires some reconciliation with social institutions. If man has inherent value, there can be no absolute contradiction between individual and social ends. That which is contrary to the conventions of society may yet be good. For the mere fact that society chooses certain ends for itself, does not make individual action, if it differs from that of the society, entirely erroneous. The worth of neither is determined by an absolute standard, but largely by tradition and experiment. (K. J. Act I, 276). The judgement of conduct, whether exercised by commons or king, is arbitrary, because the basis of the judgement is the tradition of a class and not society's sense of its own weal. How far the common good is really identified with the superlative degree of personal fancy, is seen in the exaggeration of the arts and fashions in those days. (K. J. I, 207, 212, IV, 17. K. R. 2: II, 18). When we

come to consider the bourgeoisie as a class, the principle is the same, though with different external aspects, since their genius turns to practical pursuits. Here we must see commerce as the antithesis of war—a relation they have not always borne. While commerce is usually crassly materialistic and individual, nevertheless it is also imperialistic and has socialising tendencies. Commodity is to be the bias of the world: and the people of Angiers are consistently represented as commercial in the best sense. (K. J. Act. II, especially the closing speech).

The relation of king and people is first represented as an external one: not organic. Kings regard themselves as the only real individuals with power to force their wills on the people. The latter see the new ideal king: a man who is perhaps different in kind from ordinary folk; perhaps also he belongs to another world. In any case he has no arbitrary will of his own which he seeks to impose on others. Kingship is a fulfilment of the life of the nation: real kingship means a national life and ideal. The king safeguards the opportunities in which the purposes of the people can be realized. In the disregard of form and ceremony, we can see the old view of royalty under criticism. (II, 136, 211). If the mediaeval idea of kingship has lost meaning, then ceremony is left without significance; if the king is no longer divine, then it requires no exorcism to secure his benign influence. It is the sense of intellectual power which gives the laugh to the grim irony of arbitrary kingship as a vicious element in the state. For example, the mediaeval king had no clear conception of the true end for which cities as an institution existed. (II, 210).

In this consciousness which is dawning, of kings and their ways, the glory of war brings with it the question,



"To what does it all tend?" (II, 353). But the glory of fighting has passed into the glory of gain: commerce offers situations of personal encounter no less than war. (II, 363, 394, 400, 408, 421). The necessity of commerce and fair faced league is after all the strong point in the people's attitude, because it substitutes a real ideal for one now abstract and outgrown. Ultimately we are forced to say that the readiness of the kings to accept the terms offered by the people, shows the former to be ruled by the latter. (II, 420). So unthinkable is such a situation that it is well described as "Mad world! mad kings! mad composition!" (II, 567). Yet its very madness is the key to the situation, since the dramatist is able to state the problem in terms of the new madness which now rules society. (II, 579, III, 379).

Another problem in the drama merits attention, namely, what must we infer from the relation of king and pope? The opposition of church and state, pope and king, is not significant as to which shall be the supreme power; but it is significant rather, as giving rise to questions apparently insoluble, and provocative of intellectual disaster. King John finds himself in a situation in which his divine and royal authority avail nothing. No matter how he moves he cannot be rid of entangling relations with his fellows: relations through which there is no way out, and by which his purposes are defeated. It all rests on the fact that King John completely misunderstands his own situation as king and the end for which society exists.

The relations of life are so interwoven that their very complexity necessarily involves the individual in inexplicable situations. To represent the real tragedy we have only to oppose the enthusiasm of the Renaissance spirit

